

School District Redistricting Commission

Media Contact: Rhonda Bannard (602) 370-3560
Rhonda@inspiredconnections.net

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Voters can preview plans for School Redistricting in advance of November 2008 Ballot Initiative

*Special Videos and Internet Site feature details of proposed unification of elementary districts
with high school districts throughout the state*

(Phoenix, AZ August 13, 2008) The School District Redistricting Commission (SDRC) charged with the unification of Arizona's 227 districts statewide is offering voters additional details of the proposed redistricting plans they will be considering when they go to the ballot box this November. A special redistricting information video has been produced with the help of Arizona State University's Decision Theater and is available online at <http://www.decisiontheater.com/sdrc/>. With numerous races and ballot propositions facing voters this General Election, the Commission wanted to ensure that voters understood the plans they would be considering and voting on.

And because campaign efforts on this initiative have begun to ramp up, along with word of many public gatherings being planned by concerned citizens and groups over the next few months, the Commission is cancelling the public forums it had planned around the state. "The Commission agreed to the Forums to make sure it was carrying out its responsibility to share the basic details of the plans," said Martin L. Shultz, SDRC Commission Chairman. "But we're finding that there is so much interest in this issue that it is happening naturally, so we thought it best to let people know about and have access to the informational videos that were put together." The public is free to download the videos to show at their gatherings. Commissioners are also free to participate and answer questions at those public forums.

"I believe that our system works best when voters are well informed of the issues at hand, said Litchfield Park Mayor Thomas Schoaf, SDRC Commissioner. "Third parties interested in planning discussions over the unification issue serves the public well."

The availability of the video will afford voters a view of the basic plans and answer some of the questions that go along with this complicated issue. The video on the internet site is broken down by the county impacted. If a county is not highlighted, there are no unification proposals that will be on the ballot in those areas. If a county is highlighted, voters who live in that county are invited to view that version of the video. It features an opening message with some overall details on unification, as well as a closing message with frequently asked questions that touch on teacher salaries, impact on property taxes, when unification would have to take place if voters passed it, the impact on school boards and other topics. The middle of the video features the specific plans to that county. Counties impacted include: Cochise, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai and Yuma Counties.

There is additional information voters can access at the following places:

- The final report submitted to the Governor with recommendations including maps, data sheets, financial analysis and other information can be found at <http://www.ade.az.gov/sdrc/> along with research and additional information collected and posted throughout the Commissions two plus years of work.
- Arizona's Auditor General's office also does annual reviews of schools, districts and other education issues. Its report analyzing districts, percent of dollars that are funneled into the classroom and other such issues can be found at <http://www.auditor.gen.state.az.us/>

The Commission's work was focused on redistricting separate K-8 districts with high school districts to allow for a more seamless education career and aligned curriculum and improved academic achievement, in addition to combining similar and duplicative efforts in numerous districts that could be combined for best efficiencies resulting in dollars being redirected back to teachers and into the classroom. If unification passes, the newly combined districts make the decisions on all new budgets, combined programs, how teachers are paid and other such issues, therefore maintaining local control.

In 2005, a law was passed by the Arizona Legislature to appoint a Commission to study Arizona's schools and make recommendations for creating unified districts out of the current set of 108 common school districts and 15 union districts. A unified district is one that is geographically defined and offers aligned curriculum for students Kindergarten through grade 12. In December 2007, the Commission formally presented its recommendations to Governor Napolitano.

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